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# Media Advisory

Macomb County Executive  
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## Planning & Economic Development

### *For Immediate Release*

Media Contact: Don Morandini 586-469-5285

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### **Fast Track to Business Success**

What do these businesses have in common: a company providing services for attorneys dealing with probate issues; an online retailer that specializes in high-end gear and tactical equipment for law enforcement and outdoor enthusiasts; and a new website designer and marketing company? The owners of each recently participated in the FastTrac® New Venture Entrepreneurial Training offered by the Macomb County Department of Planning & Economic Development and were winners of the “Three Minutes to Strike it Rich” competition.

Macomb County concluded its fifth session of the popular FastTrac® New Venture Entrepreneurial Training program at Velocity, the county’s collaboration center for economic growth in Sterling Heights. The ten week program, developed by the Kauffman Foundation and offered only through certified affiliates, provides an overview of how to achieve business success through the hands-on process of developing a comprehensive business plan.

“Owning a successful small business can be daunting without the right information,” says Don Morandini, deputy director of the department and class instructor. “This class covers all of the basics in bite-sized chunks.”

Charlene Tope, owner of Probate Support Specialists of St. Clair Shores and recent graduate of the program, knew that the class would involve a lot of hard work on her part but felt strongly that participation was helpful. “I really believe that this program is paramount for building a successful business. The information I learned helped me to understand how to position my business today for growth in the future.”

Tope was one of four participants selected by fellow classmates and a panel of guest judges as having the best “elevator pitch.” Other top vote getters were Roger Piovesana of Ridgeland Outfitters who is working to expand his hunting and outdoor sporting goods retail business market, April Yager of Yager Evolution, a website and branding design expert, and Michelle Fusco, a free-lance communications expert starting her own company. Each received a gift certificate for Office Max as their reward.

“It is always exciting to meet with entrepreneurs and hear their ideas about launching a new business,” said Joe Romeo, Senior Business Development Officer for Hennessey Capital who served as a guest judge. “Clarity of message, conveying a sense of credibility and out and out enthusiasm got high marks from me for each of the winners.”

Registration is now open for the next session of “FastTrac® New Venture Entrepreneurial Training.” The ten-week program, offered by the department and presented by the Michigan Small Business & Technology Development Center, U.S. Small Business Administration and Michigan Economic Development Corporation, will begin on Monday, January 23 with an orientation from 9 – 11 a.m. at Velocity (6633 18 Mile Road) in Sterling Heights.

The class will meet from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Mondays beginning January 30 through April 9.

Financial support for the program offered by the MSU Broadband Technology Opportunity Program makes it possible for the class and materials to be offered at the reduced registration fee of \$140 **or at no cost to veterans**. Registration is required; contact 586-469-5118 or e-mail [Denise.Mentzer@MacombCountyMi.gov](mailto:Denise.Mentzer@MacombCountyMi.gov)

More about the FastTrac® program: <http://fasttrac.org/>

Class participants (and winners of the Strike it Rich competition)

Charlene Tope, Probate Support Specialists – 586-415-0136 - <http://www.probatesupportspecialists.com/>

Roger Piovesana, Ridgeland Outfitters – 586-838-4551 - <http://www.ridgelandoutfitters.com/Home.html>

April Yager – Yager Evolution - 586-381-1049 – [www.yagerevolution.com](http://www.yagerevolution.com)

Michelle Fusco, Focus Communications - 586-713-4051 - [michellefusco@aol.com](mailto:michellefusco@aol.com)

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